



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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David Hendricks: Higher costs jeopardize city's gains from BRAC

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San Antonio Express-News

Mounting federal deficits threaten to erase one of the city's landmark economic development victories — the awarding of new military missions in the 2005 base-closing round.

Local business, civic and government officials already are racing to find solutions.

The missions by law must move by 2011, and local construction to accommodate the new military activities must be completed by then.

Mission realignments slated for San Antonio may account for up to \$1 billion worth of an estimated national construction funding shortfall of nearly \$10 billion through 2011.

Without the requisite construction, "the missions might not come," said John Jernigan, the retired Air Force brigadier general who last year headed the city's base-closing task force.

The funding shortfalls were projected last week in Army and Air Force estimates delivered to Congress.

The 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, known as BRAC, made 182 base closure and mission realignment decisions. San Antonio installations will garner about 3,600 more jobs than they will lose, and the city will become the center for military medicine. Fort Sam Houston alone will gain 13,375 jobs and become home to an additional 5,500 family members.

The projected funding shortfall comes mainly from BRAC's underestimate of the construction costs associated with the geographic shifts of missions, Jernigan said. Once post-BRAC planners and architects started putting construction numbers to paper, the cost estimates went up dramatically, he said.

The BRAC decisions are aimed at saving the Pentagon \$4.2 billion a year, but \$21 billion will be needed to pay for the mission consolidations through 2011.

Last week, Army officials told Congress they expect construction funding shortfalls of \$6 billion to \$8 billion, and Air Force officials added their expected shortfall of nearly \$2 billion.

The higher costs echo previous base-closing rounds that end up becoming messier and costlier than expected. One example was the closing in the past decade of Kelly AFB, which required expensive environmental cleanup by the Pentagon.

Between \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion will be needed in San Antonio, Jernigan said, citing the latest estimates from local military installations.

Between \$500 million and \$1 billion of it could go unfunded, Jernigan said, including projects at Fort Sam Houston, Lackland AFB and Randolph AFB.

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The Army's Fort Sam Houston could be the hardest-hit because a large medical education and research role is planned for the installation. Classrooms, laboratories, barracks, offices and recreation facilities must be built.

The BRAC-estimated \$165 million for a 500,000-square-foot medical clinic at Lackland won't be enough, Jernigan said. Instead, it will take between \$200 million and \$275 million.

Local officials expected BRAC's construction underestimates, said Ed Davis, city Economic Development Department assistant director.

"With Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the Iraq war, there's not enough money to go around," Davis said. "It's going to be difficult to find the funding."

When the higher cost projections started arriving from installation commanders, the city, county and CPS Energy banded together to re-energize the Defense Transformation Institute, operated by the Texas Research and Technology Foundation.

Contributions of \$100,000 from the city, \$50,000 from Bexar County and \$25,000 from CPS Energy led to the hiring in March of former CPS Energy executive Bill Hartman as executive director.

Jernigan, who heads the 10-member institute board, said the institute will strive to become self-sufficient as it arranges military-private partnerships.

The institute will try to match developers to construction projects in ways that may lower costs to the military. One way, called enhanced-use leases, was pioneered by Orion Partners at Fort Sam Houston. Orion Partners bought the old Brooke Army Medical Center building and small adjacent buildings, renovated them, and leased them back to the Army and private-sector tenants doing business with the military.

The City Council on Thursday will consider an ordinance to apply for a \$916,195 grant from the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment to pay for planning staff and professional services that will accommodate the new military missions.

A larger and broader organization called the Military Transformation Task Force has been organized to study the "outside-the-gates" needs for the area military installations as they expand with new missions, especially streets and utilities.

"The military pays for construction inside the gates, but there are needs outside the gates, too," Davis said.

San Antonio's Washington delegation will be critical in helping direct enough federal allocations for construction to ensure the missions arrive here. On the hot seat are U.S. Rep. Henry Bonilla, R-San Antonio, who sits on the House Appropriations Committee, and U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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Air Force Times



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F-16 crashes near Luke; pilot safely ejects

Associated Press

GLENDAL, Ariz. — An Air Force F-16 fighter crashed Tuesday about two miles southwest of Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., but the pilot ejected safely, authorities said.

The single-seat F-16 crashed into a field just after takeoff from the training base west of Phoenix, base spokeswoman Mary Jo May said.

The plane burned once it was on the ground but the pilot was uninjured, said Alison Cooper, a spokeswoman for the Rural-Metro Fire Department. Cooper said the pilot signed paperwork saying he didn't want to be treated.

May said he taken to Banner Estrella Medical Center to be examined.

The F-16 was assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing and had just taken off on a training mission when it crashed at 9:51 a.m., May said.

Former Arizona Rep. Joe Hart, who was driving near the crash site and witnessed the plane going down, said the downed plane was accompanied by another jet. The aircraft were flying together just southwest of the base at a low altitude when things went amiss.

"It just started falling, and all of a sudden the pilot ejected and the plane went in," Hart said. "The guy ejected real fast, and I saw the parachute and the plane just blew up."

Hart said he tried to locate the pilot, but he was apparently in another area. The pilot of the second jet was circling, Hart said, in an apparent effort to lead rescuers to the pilot's landing site.

Other would-be rescuers drove across the open farm field to get to the destroyed plane. Hart said he tried to warn them to stay clear because of the potential the jet carried unexploded ordnance.

Capt. Brady Smith said the aircraft was unarmed.

Luke, in the Phoenix suburb of Glendale, is the world's largest F-16 training base.

The plane came down in a farm field some distance from any homes or businesses.

"It just happened to hit an open field just perfect," Hart said. "It was a nice green field where there was nothing to burn but the fuel."



Air Force personal work at the scene where an Air Force F-16 fighter jet crashed on take off from nearby Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., on Tuesday. — *Khampha Bouaphanh / AP Photo*